



CULLODEN
ESTATE AND SPA

Our Wedding Day

Chris & Emma





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How did you meet?

We had lots of mutual friends so I thought that made it fine to make the first move! Emma had been doing some travelling so we had been chatting back and forward about that. Then I asked her if she wanted to go for coffee...which she agreed to! So I got out of work early to go meet her before the coffee shops shut! We fitted in 3 or 4 dates in the next few weeks - Dinner, crazy golf, and home-cooked meals were the standard! We enjoyed each other's company and had many similar interests. We met each other's families after a month or two and all got on very well. Unfortunately, lockdown came a few months later but our relationship continued to flourish!

How did he propose?

It was Christmas Eve, I had planned two locations - both in Newcastle Co. Down. I'd chosen this direction because, during the pandemic, we'd grown to love walks and picnics here. The views are stunning and we have good memories there. Unfortunately, it was a really misty damp day, so I opted for Tollymore Forest Park. I took the camera and tripod with me to video the occasion!

Again, unfortunately, the weather turned, and the rain began just as I'd found 'the spot' and began setting up the camera! I knew I had to make it work - so I told Emma to head over to the far side of the famous 'Stepping Stones' and I'd be just over...however I, under pressure couldn't get the camera setup properly and the rain was coming on heavier and heavier! Thankfully I got the video started, and began my crossing, double checking the ring was in my inside coat pocket! As I reached the far side I knelt down and proposed...she said yes! We quickly packed up and made for cover out of the rain, reaching the car for a cuppa! We finished our walk and made our way back home to tell our family and friends - it was a great Christmas Eve.



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The Photographer

Alexandra Barfoot, has been a lifelong family friend of mine and we had also seen her work for other weddings which we thought was amazing. At each stage from planning, on the day and receiving our photographs Alexandra was extremely professional, reliable and efficient. We are so glad we chose her as our photographer and are extremely pleased with all the pictures we have to treasure our special day

The Planning

We didn't have a wedding planner to oversee our entire day. However, at The Culloden Michelle was our wedding co-ordinator in the lead-up to our wedding and Sam was in charge on the day. Both did a highly professional job, which demonstrated they really cared about us as a couple having the best day possible. Michelle replied to every email, question, or query we had; nothing was too much trouble and at every stage, she made it extremely straightforward. Sam on the day had a brilliant eye for detail, each aspect of our day ran on time and we cannot thank him enough for how he conducted such a slick operation during dinner.

The Dresses

Petticoat Lane Bridal (Hillsborough) was the first bridal boutique I visited on a wintery January night. I had an idea of the style of dress I would like but tried on about 15 different dresses. Paula was amazing at helping guide me through each of the designers and dresses. Eventually, I tried on the dress that I knew was 'the one', this was the total opposite style to what I'd imagined but I knew this was the perfect dress for me. I chose Sassi Holford 'Hannah' dress from their 'Love Conquers All' range and single-tier veil with pearl detail. With less than 6 months of turnaround time this did not prove an issue, the girls had my dress in-store by mid-May. They were even able to recommend a dressmaker for the alterations, which all made for such a smooth transition in getting my dress ready in good time before our big day.

After such a success with Petticoat Lane Bridal this was my first choice for Bridesmaids, they had such a wide range of styles and colours. The girls tried on a wide range of dresses and we finally decided on Irish designer Dresscode. It was a difficult choice between 2 style and colours, but as a lover of pink I couldn't go past the 'Emma' dress in rose pink – a silk halter neck style with a bow detail at the front. Again, the timing could not have been better for delivery of the dresses and Paula at Petticoat Lane made this experience for my bridesmaids and I so enjoyable and stress free.



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Decor

SLB Floral Design was another family friend who we wanted to use for our wedding flowers. After an initial consultation, Sarah was able to draw together a plan for flowers that could be used in both the church and reception. In keeping with our theme, we wanted loose wildflowers with a mix of blush, dusky pink, and nude tones. A mix of roses, peony roses and eucalyptus were the main flowers and foliage used. We had 2 main displays which were the focal point in both the church and reception, for outside decoration we had creamery cans at the entrance; to finish inside smaller vases and tealights were used to decorate windowsills and tables.

We kept our room décor simple with the flowers (mentioned above), welcome signs, order of the day, and a table for our guest book, post box etc. At the top table, we used our large floral display with the smaller displays used on the remaining guest tables with candelabra centerpieces. Place cards were navy, we decided on opting for personalised menu cards from Copper Bee and table names were in pink – all linking together our colour theme. Having the curtains with fairy lights dividing off the Stuart Suite made it feel a more intimate setting and the sunny views of Belfast Lough really added to this - we are so glad we chose the Culloden, as this venue has such a stunning setting. The amazing team at the Culloden did all the setup in The Stuart Suite, we left everything a few days before and when we arrived on our wedding day the room looked incredible

Stationary

Copper Bee Lettering was our stationary choice – Amy is a good friend and was brilliant in stepping us through every aspect of choosing and designing our stationary. Firstly, the invites were in keeping with our theme, a classic design that reflected our key colour navy. Amy did an amazing job and her handwritten calligraphy on every envelope made them so special. All our on the day stationary reflected our pink and navy colour scheme; our table plan was a map of Ireland using our favourite places visited as table names. Working alongside Amy at every step was so enjoyable and enjoyed the input we had to making every small detail as we wanted.

The Food

On arrival at The Culloden, guests had the choice of sparkling apple juice or tea/coffee and shortbread. To start we had a duo of appetisers – Ham Hock Terrine and roasted bane tomato and red bell pepper soup. At our menu tasting, we both loved the slow-cooked daube of beef, so this was a must for our wedding menu. Guests had the option between seared chicken supreme, stuffed with black pudding and pancetta & leek cream or slow-cooked daube of beef with red wine and sweet balsamic glaze.



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From the menu tasting evening, Michelle ensured that every detail was clarified and communicated clearly to the chef, which ensured every single guest enjoyed their meal. Dessert was a classic crème brulee served with tea and coffee. For our evening buffet, we opted for cones of chicken goujons/fish and chips and mini burgers, served with wedding cake. A massive thanks to all the staff at The Culloden for making such a seamless service during our reception and ensuring the highest standard of food was provided.

Wedding Cake

As a keen baker and Home Economics teacher, some would have thought I would have opted to make my own cake. However, I had an extremely talented past pupil who now runs her own cake business, Homebaked by Shannon. She was the exact person to trust with making such a special cake. We decided on a 3 tier Lemon, Raspberry & White Chocolate, and Chocolate cake, with gold leaf, pearls, and fresh flowers to decorate the front of the cake. We also ordered an extra cutting slab of Victoria sponge to ensure all our guests were able to enjoy some cake. This cake was so fresh, flavoursome and looked incredible – we couldn't recommend Shannon enough to those Brides & Grooms out there!

Favourite Moment Bride:

Every part of the day was so special and there are so many great memories. One highlight was the black Lamborghini waiting at the church for us to drive to the Culloden. This was probably the best journey I've ever had from Magherafelt to Belfast, giving us time to reflect on the day so far and enjoy a picnic that the lovely ladies at the church had packed for us. Having our friend as lead singer of our wedding band "The Bentley Boys" ensured a full dance floor, made for an amazing night dancing with all our family and friends. And of course that extra special moment every young girl dreams of when her dad walks her to the top of the aisle, this was definitely emotional but also so special!

Favourite Moment Groom:

My favourite moment is a tough question. We had planned our day with a theme of family and friends. We had friends and family taking part - singing, playing, reading, and a string quartet from Emma's school playing to guests on arrival at the Culloden. Our families and friends had kindly prepared some food for after the church service so we could enjoy some time relaxed time with everyone as 'newly weds'! We were very kindly given a Lamborghini Hurricane to drive up from the Church to The Culloden - that was a great experience! Sharing a first dance with my new wife was a lovely moment, followed by the second dance with my mum was also special. These were all great memories - however one particularly special one was where Emma and I shared a lovely moment sitting at the front of the Culloden at midnight, reflecting on the day under the night sky - as the new Mr & Mrs Beverland!

